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SUBJECT: SPECIAL MEDIA REACTION: IRAQ'S ISOLATING WALLS

¶1. SUMMARY: An Iraqi columnist in "Al-Khaleej" writes two op-eds over consecutive days on the Aadhamiya wall in which he describes it as a ghetto and compares it to the wall that divides Israel from Palestine. A columnist in "Al-Bayan" is also strongly critical of the "isolating walls" built around Aadhamiya, describing them as sectarian walls. A female columnist in "Al-Khaleej" lays out the reasons for the Arab world's resentment of U.S. walls built around Al-Aadhamiya. End Summary.

¶2. Under the headline "Aadhamiya's rejected wall", the columnist, Jaafar Mohammed Ahmed, wrote a 04/24 op-ed in Sharjah-based Arabic daily "Al-Khaleej" (circulation 90,000):

"The fence built around Aadhamiya is a wall inspired by the racist "Israeli" wall and the Berlin wall. It is also clear evidence of the failure of the American policy to maintain security in Iraq... Finding a solution to the violence in Iraq cannot be done through the construction of concrete walls between regions in an attempt to fulfill the so-called strategy of "breaking the cycle of sectarian violence." The American administration is now immersed in the quagmire of Iraq and is therefore trying to escape from these failures by bringing up new innovations such as the Aadhamiya wall which is unacceptable to Iraqis, to the Arab world and to the international community. The United States should set a clear plan to get out of this quagmire instead of dividing Iraq through sectarian strife, creating such walls, or planning to build more walls whose only aim is to impose restrictions on the Iraqis and not protect them. The aim of these walls is to protect their troops who are incapable of securing themselves."

¶3. Under the headline "They are Ghettos, not walls", the columnist, Jaafar Mohammed Ahmed, wrote a 04/25 op-ed in Sharjah-based Arabic daily "Al-Khaleej"

"...The isolating walls look like ghettos which are meant to isolate, similar to islands, turning sectarian illusions into geographic and political realities. The wall built around Aadhamiya will not be the "Great wall" as the one in China because it appears that more and more isolating walls will be built around different areas in Iraq... The scene is very comical, as the U.S. is trying to acquit itself of all the destruction it created, while blaming the Iraqis. Those who talk about their desire not to divide Iraq are actually doing it, because walls create sectarian and cultural isolation between Iraqis."

¶4. Under the headline "The Aathamiya wall might cause that which is greater (Aathamiya in Arabic means Great)", the 04/25 editorial in Dubai-based Arabic daily "Al-Bayan," (circulation 85,000) read: "...When Al-Maliki rejected the construction of the isolating walls in Iraq, the U.S. Ambassador expressed his respect for Al-Mailiki's request. However on the other hand, U.S. military officials rushed to express their reservations about Al-Maliki's request, and emphasized the need for "continuing the dialogue" on this matter. They say their aim is to prevent Shiite militants from forcing residents to evacuate the inhabitants of Aadhamiya. But such pretexts and U.S. assertions are not valid and in fact were undermined by the Aadhamiya inhabitants themselves who demonstrated in protest of the isolating walls."

¶5. Under the headline "Why did the Aadhamiya wall provoke us?", female columnist, Dr. Amina Abu-Shihab, wrote a 04/26 op-ed in Sharjah-based Arabic daily "Al-Khaleej":

"Building walls and fences around cities are a medieval Western practice. The Westerners first created ghettos. Their target was to discriminate and imprison those who were different from them (such as Jews) in the hells of ghettos and isolation. The four year U.S. occupation of Iraq is based on a medieval mentality... Because Americans are trapped inside the Green Zone and are so afraid of any attacks inside their fortresses, they want to remove this fear by imprisoning the Iraqis themselves with walls they build around cities. By doing so, they are outpacing their ancestors the Eastern Crusaders in degrading Arabs' dignity and exposing them to the worst kinds of human agony... These walls allow only one entrance and exit through which only death militias as well as American forces can at any time enter. The other Iraqis from neighboring cities or relatives or merchants will not be able to

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enter. Why were we provoked? Maybe because we are seeing here another siege against Iraq which is worse than it was before the invasion. Maybe it is because the Americans are acting like their Israeli friends. Above all, the Americans act as if they own Iraq and have the right to isolate a city or turn it into a solitary prison while displacing others outside. This psychological U.S. ownership of Iraq, through walls of isolation, is what makes this country a twin to Palestine."

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